Landscapes of Mourning in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry

The poetry of loss and mourning has always been profoundly and intimately connected with place. From its early inception in Classical fertility rituals, what became known as the genre of elegy developed in close relationship with an understanding of "the pastoral" as a place of renewal and consolation. Traditionally, one of the primary functions of pastoral settings was to alleviate grief by directing the mourning process towards the natural beauty of the landscape, at the same time offering a vital sense of continuity in the ever changing but returning seasons. John Milton's foundational English elegy, *Lycidas,* written for Edward King who died at sea in 1637, acquires its stature through a powerful amalgamation of Classical, mythological settings and actual geographical landscapes close to the Irish Sea where King was thought to have drowned. The poem's triumphant conclusion turns heavenward from a very specific place, St Michael's Mount in Cornwall, thus ensuring its own English and Christian provenance.

In broader, theoretical terms, however, elegy depends upon place as a kind of deflection from grief and mourning. As Kenneth Burke reminds us, 'no poet can write of death from an immediate experience of it," and therefore "the imagining of death necessarily involves images not directly belonging to it" (1952, 369). Habitually, and often obsessively, elegy turns to images of place as a way of recovering the dead person within a remembered setting, in effect making them walk again, but just as likely that turning to place results in a disillusioned discovery of absence and emptiness. Much of the emotional and psychological complexity of elegy as an emerging genre in English poetry is inscribed in images of place. Thomas Gray's celebrated 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1751) marks a crucial turning point in the history of the genre in that it both acknowledges the rural poor as worthy

of commemoration and presents a demythologized landscape – an English country churchyard – as the fitting site for mourning the lost potential of those who are buried there. Gray's 'Elegy' aspires towards stability and repose, establishing its own undemonstrative English pastoral in the figure of the ploughman and providing many of the imaginative resources for later landscapes of mourning, from the "glimmering" twilight atmosphere to the "ivy-mantled tower" and the "yew tree's shade" (Gilbert 2001, 428).

In the nineteenth century, attitudes to place in elegiac poetry become increasingly problematic and intensely ambivalent. Place is a source of possible psychic recovery and emotional renewal, but it is also a site of frustration and blockage. Alfred Lord Tennyson is the pre-eminent poet of this complicated elegiac poetics of place, and nowhere is this more clearly evident than in his *In Memoriam*, written after the death of his close friend and fellow poet, Arthur Henry Hallam, on 15 September 1833. Hallam died in Vienna and his body was transported by sea from Trieste, delaying his burial until 3 January 1834. Tennyson appears to have started writing the lyrics that would constitute *In Memoriam* shortly after receiving the news of Hallam's death in October 1833, though the elegy was not published as a book until 1850.

As Section XI of *In Memoriam* vividly demonstrates, the circumstances of Hallam's death abroad and his delayed burial powerfully shaped both spatial and temporal images in Tennyson's composition of the poem. The speaker in these lines imagines Hallam brought by ship to his burial ground in England (he was buried in Clevedon in Somerset), a crossing that punctuates the poet's meditation on the rural landscape with recurring thoughts of the sea:

> Calm is the morn without a sound,
> Calm as to suit a calmer grief,

And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze.
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

Appropriately, for a poem of mourning, the seasonal setting is autumn, and the mood of the poem is correspondingly autumnal. There is a simple but compelling temporal structure through which the poem transports us from morning to evening, and there is an equivalent spatial structure through which we move from the nearness of woodland and the specificity of a “faded leaf” to the vastness of the ocean. The poem is also structured around the implications of the repeated word ‘”calm” and the paradox of a disturbed or troubled “calm”. In terms of its spatial poetics, the poem dramatises the discord between the natural calm of the landscape and the numbed calm of the speaker’s bereavement. Against the quite calm of the morning, the peaceful calm of farmland, and the evening calm of the sea, the poem sets the speaker’s calm despair and brings us finally to the literal “dead calm” of the body in the ship. “Calm” is the keyword in the poem. It is the word with which the poem begins, and it reappears insistently at the start of the second line. It is also the word with which each stanza opens in a compelling act of anaphoric repetition. The diction and syntax of the poem,

however, are best described as reduplicative rather than simply repetitive. In other words, with each expression of calm there is an incremental suggestiveness and variation in meaning. The great achievement of *In Memoriam* lies in its delicate adjustments of thought and feeling, registered throughout the poem in a continual contrast of inner and outer landscapes.

The reiteration of calmness brings us to a realization of a troubled calm – a shocked or speechless calm in the silence of the morning. The chestnut pattering to the ground reminds us of a fertile nature that will carry on in its seasonal cycles, but "pattering" also gently suggests the lost pattering of feet, and of human presence. Tennyson's landscapes are not the idealized, mythologized landscapes of Milton's *Lycidas* and Shelley's *Adonais*. The vocabulary of "wold" and "furze" establishes the poem's English setting, and perhaps more precisely its memories of the Lincolnshire countryside. The spatial design of the poem is vertical, as well as horizontal, and this is clearly evident in "high wold" and 'lessening towers" (a striking suggestion of optical illusion which effectively catches the seeming diminishment of buildings as they recede into the distance). The accompanying horizontal perspective is established through the imagery of "yon great plain", "the bounding main", and "this wide air".

There is a perceptible natural beauty in the landscape, but a beauty that cannot altogether compensate for the loss of life. "The dews that drench the furze" are uncomfortably close to tears, with the alliterative "drench" tending towards excess. The "silvery gossamers" is an alluring image of the spiders' webs, but "twinkle" (more usually associated with stars) anticipates the evening sky
and the "silver sleep" of moonlight in the final stanza. The beauty of "green and gold" brings with it suggestions of autumnal decay, as do the "leaves that redden to the fall". The announcement of "dead calm", a euphemism that might be used of a calm sea, has a devastating effect when applied literally to the body of Arthur Henry

Hallam. A body that might have heaved with love and passion now "heaves" only with the movement of the ship on "the heaving deep" – at once a powerful metonymic description of the sea and a magnificent metaphor of death.

Attending to the spatial poetics of an individual lyric such as this can help us to appreciate all the more the effective formal patterning of the larger elegiac composition, including the so-called *In Memoriam* stanza (a rhymed quatrain in iambic tetrameter). The deployment of rhymes in each quatrain, reminiscent of the opening quatrains of Petrarch's love sonnets (*abba*), invites speculation about the extent to which *In Memoriam* mimetically captures the rhythms of grief, subtly articulating both a continual longing for intimate union and a repeated dispersal of that imagined possibility. Just as the speaker's relationship with place is one that involves both nearness and distance, so too the rhymes in each stanza aptly convey both togetherness and separation.

We might then begin to explore the idea of a spatial poetics in which there is a correspondence between the space of an imagined landscape and the space of the poem's formal design. What lends credence to the idea is the reappearance of the *In Memoriam* stanza and its reduplicative diction and syntax in the work of Christina Rossetti, a poet intensely preoccupied with spatial design and formal patterning in her poetry. "Birchington Churchyard", a seemingly modest, low-key elegiac lyric, takes on a special significance among late Victorian poems of mourning when scrutinized in terms of its spatial poetics.

A lowly hill which overlooks a flat,
  Half sea, half country side;
  A flat-shored sea of low-voiced creeping tide
Over a chalky, weedy mat.

A hill of hillocks, flowery and kept green
  Round Crosses raised for hope,
  With many-tinted sunsets where the slope

Faces the lingering western sheen.

A lowly hope, a height that is but low,
While Time sets solemnly,
While the tide rises of Eternity,
Silent and neither swift nor slow.

The keyword in "Birchington Churchyard" is "lowly". It describes both interior and exterior landscapes, both "hill" and "hope", making the connection between them apparent in the way that "A lowly hope" at the beginning of the closing stanza looks back to "A lowly hill" at the beginning of the opening stanza. The word "flat" is also repeated, and like "lowly" it aptly describes a particular kind of landscape, as well as an emotional condition associated with loss. Like the Tennyson lyric, "Birchington Churchyard" incorporates both landscape and seascape within its spatial reach.

"Birchington Churchyard" was published in the Victorian periodical, the *Athenaeum*, on 29 April 1882, just twenty days after the death of Christina Rossetti's brother, the Pre-Raphaelite poet and painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, on Easter Sunday, 9 April 1882. Although the poem is without any dedication or any specific reference to a deceased person, it functions as an elegy for the brother Christina Rossetti had cared for at Birchington, on the Kent coast, in the final months of his life. Dante Gabriel Rossetti had insisted that he did not wish to be buried in the family plot at Highgate Cemetery in London, allegedly because of the scandalous circumstances associated with the burial of Elizabeth Siddall, the model for many of his paintings from 1851 onwards and his wife from 1860 to her death in 1862. In 1869, Rossetti sought and received permission from the Home Secretary to exhume the body and recover a collection of poems he had placed in the coffin. The offence to Victorian public morality caused by the exhumation, coupled with dismay at her brother's notorious elevation of the religion of art over Christianity, plausibly explains why Dante Gabriel Rossetti is not named as the subject of "Birchington Churchyard". The

poem is low-keyed and noticeably reserved in its mourning, deflecting its depressed emotions towards the Kentish landscape.

As a way of understanding the spatial poetics of "Birchington Churchyard" and the way in which it creates a landscape of mourning, we might first ask what is a "lowly hill" and what distinguishes it from a "low hill". "Lowly" is a word associated with Christian humility, and more likely to be employed as a description of social status than topography. The phrase "lowly hill" transports us from the "lowly cattle shed" of the Christmas carol, "Once in Royal David's City", to the hill on which he died (Calvary), and so obliquely we are offered a fitting set of allusions for a poem that is centred on a Christian burial place. "Lowly" is gently echoed in "low-voiced creeping tide" and in "a lowly hope, a height that is but low", accentuating the poem's language of paradox and making clear the correlation between outer and inner landscapes.

The "flat" of the opening line is a noun, a reference to low-level ground close to water, but initially it seems to function as an adjective and is therefore likely to take us by surprise at the end of the line: "a lowly hill which overlooks a flat, / Half sea, half country side". The discomfort of that opening line is intensified by its metrical irregularity. Compared with the opening line of the closing stanza, "A lowly hope, a height that is but low" (regular iambic pentameter), it seems to resist the imposition of lyrical smoothness. "Flat" is then picked up in line three, this time as a compound adjective in "flat-shored sea". This is a liminal or littoral landscape, a coastal landscape, "half sea, half country side", of a kind often used by elegists, including Milton, to intimate the metaphysical space between life and death. In this instance, however, the symbolic associations of the coastal reach are played down and what predominates is an austere, unidealised elegiac landscape: "a chalky weedy mat".

The word “hill” is repeated and reworked in “A hill of hillocks”, adding to the poem’s dwindling, diminishing sense of hope. “Flowery and kept green” is unexceptional, purposefully mundane, and perhaps even tending towards an impression of strained effect. The image of the sunset that follows is a well-established trope of death, but the plural “many-tinted sunsets” adds a prismatic uncertainty to this particular death. “Lingering” anticipates “lowly hope” – it is itself a word that is often applied in negative circumstances to hope. The sunset imagery is transferred to the abstract, capitalized “Time”, just as the imagery of the tide is transferred to “Eternity”. The closing lines suggest an `awareness of the afterlife as ceaseless and remorseless, like the sea, but the stress on “Silent” has as much to do with the speaker’s inability to articulate and express her grief as it has with the quiet movement of the tide.

“Birchington Churchyard” proved to be one of Christina Rossetti’s late poems. She died twelve years later in 1894. Thomas Hardy, her near contemporary, was to carry on writing poems until the 1920s. The comparison is instructive, because it reminds us that Hardy is as much a modern poet as he is a Victorian poet, and also that Hardy’s poems of loss and mourning sometimes issue from a troubled perception of historical transition rather than from the death of a friend or relative. One of Hardy’s best-known lyrics, “The Darkling Thrush”, is a case in point. Originally titled “By the Century’s Deathbed” and published in the *Graphic* on 29 December 1900, Hardy later added the date 31 December 1900, as if to make explicit the poem’s powerful apprehension of futurity at the end of the first year of a new century.

As Jahan Ramazani points out, Hardy simultaneously “mourns the passing of one era and anxiously anticipates the arrival of another” (1994, 36). What makes “The Darkling Thrush” especially compelling for Ramazani is that it functions self-consciously and metapoetically to demonstrate the exhaustion of traditional elegiac

modes of writing, and it does so by fastening its attention on a desolate winter landscape: “the poem represents the nineteenth century as a dead landscape and a dead aesthetic” (1994, 37).

The speaker’s leaning posture seems entirely fitting to the transitional moment of the poem, while the “coppice gate” of the opening line seems fashioned specifically as a modern pastoral entrance to a panoramic landscape of loss:

I leant upon a coppice gate
    When Frost was spectre-grey,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
    The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
    Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
    Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
    The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
    The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
    Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
    Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
    The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
    Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
    In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
    Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
    Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
    Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
    His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
    And I was unaware.

The poem draws on conventional elegiac tropes, at the same time skilfully renovating these to complement its own desolate winter landscape. “The weakening eye of day” recalls traditional images of sunset in earlier English elegies, while the “tangled bine-stems” (the long flexible stems of climbing plants) both connect the poem to the familiar pastoral imagery of dying plants and introduce a note of dissonance in their comparison to “strings of broken lyres”. The verb “scored” is highly effective in this context, simultaneously registering a perception of musical notation, written transcription, and painful incision. The opening description of frost as “spectre-grey” establishes a ghostly atmosphere, so that the later word “haunted” (used primarily in the sense of “frequented”) picks up a spectral charge and serves a double purpose in conveying both the presence and absence of local inhabitants.

What is most striking about “The Darkling Thrush” in terms of its spatial poetics, however, is the extent to which the landscape is figured as a site of mourning, not for an individual person, as in the earlier elegies we have looked at, but for an entire era: “The land’s sharp features seemed to be / The Century’s corpse outleant”. The imaginative vision here is bold and daring, though Hardy takes risks in personifying the century and extending the spatial dimensions of the metaphor even further, so that the sky and the wind become accoutrements of death in a clamorous alliterative transformation: “His crypt the cloudy canopy / The wind his death-lament”. Within the “growing gloom” of the century’s end, the conventional elegiac expectation of comfort and consolation being found in nature seems severely compromised. Nor is there much likelihood of renewal or resurrection, either at the traditional pastoral level (‘The ancient pulse of germ and birth / Was shrunken hard and dry”) or at the individual, spiritual level (“And every spirit upon earth / Seemed fervourless as I”).

Hardy subtly suggests the possibilities of uplift in the verb “arose” with which he describes the unexpected voice of the song thrush. The poem’s intertextual associations with John Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale” allow for subliminal echoes of a transcendent idiom to filter through its own desperate search for joy and ecstasy (“Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird”). Both bird poems register the capacity of the writer for self-deception in the midst of a desire for transcendence and transformation. Hardy’s poem is much more acutely concerned than its predecessor, however, with the landscape as a palimpsest of belief. Its strategy is to register absence through what is “written on terrestrial things” and in doing so it constitutes a challenge to some of the central tenets of nineteenth-century Christian theology. In particular, Hardy contradicts the kind of Evangelical typology espoused by John Ruskin in *Modern Painters*, in which to read and interpret the landscape is to follow the finger of God. “The Darkling Thrush” invites the thought of Christian consolation, with “carolings” and “blessed Hope” associating the bird with Christmas, but it also undercuts any assurance at the level of the speaker’s own consciousness. The treble clef that might be used in a musical notation of bird song is reduced to a tremble, and a general uncertainty is aptly communicated in the awkward syntax of the speaker’s declaration “That I could think” (a statement that ambivalently suggests both inspiration and delusion). The poem issues from a profoundly agnostic sensibility, exploring a landscape of mourning in which the final perception is of a state of not-knowing. The bird’s song is a ‘happy good-night air’, a description that both aligns the bird with folk tunes and ballads and dissolves it into emptiness. Lest we be tempted to overstate the promise of “Some blessed Hope”, the poem closes with the speaker’s ultimate failure to find any cause for joy in the diminished landscape of a century’s ending, neatly adumbrated in the negative prefix of the final word, “unaware”.

Hardy's lament for a passing era prepares him mentally and emotionally for the more intensely personal elegies published after the death of his first wife, Emma Gifford, in 1912. The composition of "Poems of 1912-13" reveals the process through which Hardy refashioned a distinctive nineteenth-century poetics of landscape and extended it into a mode of writing and mourning that would come to be regarded as one of the great achievements of twentieth-century literature. Shortly after her death, Hardy discovered some reminiscences that his wife had written about her early life in Cornwall, including her excited first meeting with her future husband. In these writings, later published as *Some Recollections* by Emma Hardy, she recalls showing Hardy "the solemn small shores where the seals lived, coming out of great caverns very occasionally", one of several instances of landscape description that would feature in the "Poems of 1912-13". Hardy was stricken with remorse, all the more so considering how unhappy and uncommunicative his relationship with Emma had been in later years, and in the early months of 1913 he revisited the places in Cornwall where they had fallen in love.

"After a Journey" is one of the most frequently cited titles in a grouping of poems that some critics have hesitated to call a sequence, mainly because of its noticeably wandering and wavering quality. Its popularity has no doubt to do with its sense of arrival after a journey that might be construed in both literal and metaphorical terms, and for this reason it repays attention in terms of its striking spatial poetics. The poem describes a return to a remembered landscape as well as a steadily documented physical movement through that landscape. It presents itself as a recollection written after that particular journey, but also after the archetypal experience of life's journey, and after that other journey, which is the confrontation of grief and loss that has come to be known in Freudian terms as "the work of mourning". Of special interest in terms of Hardy's reconfiguring of the earlier spatial

poetics of “The Darkling Thrush” is the idea of a haunted landscape that carries associations of both human inhabitation (familiar “haunts”) and ghostly desolation. If the earlier poem conducts its investigation of the past through the intervening “voice” of the bird, the later poem is obsessively drawn to the “voiceless” intermediary of the dead woman’s spirit:

> Hereto I come to view a voiceless ghost;
> Whither, O whither will its whim now draw me?
> Up the cliff, down, till I'm lonely, lost,
> And the unseen waters' ejaculations awe me.
> Where you will next be there's no knowing,
> Facing round about me everywhere,
> With your nut-coloured hair,
> And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and going.
>
> Yes: I have re-entered your olden haunts at last;
> Through the years, through the dead scenes I have tracked you;
> What have you now found to say of our past -
> Viewed across the dark space wherein I have lacked you?
> Summer gave us sweets, but autumn wrought division?
> Things were not lastly as firstly well
> With us twain, you tell?
> But all's closed now, despite Time's derision.
>
> I see what you are doing: you are leading me on
> To the spots we knew when we haunted here together,
> The waterfall, above which the mist-bow shone
> At the then fair hour in the then fair weather,
> And the cave just under, with a voice still so hollow
> That it seems to call out to me from forty years ago,
> When you were all aglow,
> And not the thin ghost that I now frailly follow!
>
> Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,
> The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily,
> Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,
> For the stars close their shutters and the dawn whitens hazily.
> Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours,
> The bringing me here; nay, bring me here again!
> I am just the same as when
> Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

The opening line of the poem has an archaic formality about it, prompted by the old-fashioned “Hereto” and accentuated by the internal rhyme with “view” and the

alliterative chime with “voiceless” (the pairing of these words effectively communicating the speaker’s desire to see, if not hear, the shade of his dead wife). The purpose of “Hereto” is to announce the starting point of the journey, but it also suggest the signing of a document, as if the poet is acting as his own witness as he commits himself to writing. The opening is a smoothly lyrical line of iambic pentameter that will subsequently be broken up as the journey progresses.

As with the poems by Tennyson and Rossetti, we are presented with a littoral or coastal landscape, and Hardy navigates this effectively to conjure up an image of his own disoriented self: “Up the cliff, down, till I’m lonely, lost / And the unseen waters’ ejaculations awe me”. Peter Sacks, in *The English Elegy,* has offered a brilliantly provocative Freudian reading of how the elegy as a genre is customarily fuelled by a powerful reproductive urge to continue living in the face of death, hence the prevalence of strongly phallic imagery in so many instances (1985, 13-15). Hardy’s use of “ejaculations” belongs to this convention, but the word is nevertheless unusual in the context of lyrical poetry of the period, especially in conjunction with feelings of “awe”. The “awe” becomes intelligible, however, when we begin to realize as readers that the description of the water as “unseen” is both a reference to the terrifying height of cliffs above the sea (high up and therefore out of sight of water) and a literal denotation of a seascape that cannot be viewed because of darkness (the temporal setting is late at night and just before dawn). The landscape is therefore simultaneously enchanting and dangerous. The shade of the dead woman is diffused throughout the landscape (“Facing round about me everywhere”), yet endearingly presented in touching human details: “With your nut-coloured hair, / And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and going”.

In keeping with the Virgilian epigraph that prefaces the “Poems of 1912-13” (*Veteris vestigia flammae*), the poem pursues the vestiges or traces of an old flame.

There is a strongly physical realization of such tracing in the speaker's insistent declaration to his dead wife, "I have tracked you". Temporal and spatial perspectives are beautifully collapsed in "dead scenes" and in the memorable evocation of the poem itself as "Scanned across the dark space wherein I have lacked you". A way of looking intently, as with the proverbial "scanning the horizon", is neatly aligned here with the more specialised literary use of scanning as a mode of metrical composition. Ramazani notes astutely that "The dark space is a curious metaphor, ambiguously alluding to both the span of time since her death and the span of time since the death of their love" (1998, 58). In conjunction with "Scanned", of course, "the dark space" is also an arresting metaphor for the mind of the poet, anticipating T. S. Eliot's memorable account of the "dark embryo" that forms in the poet's consciousness and gradually takes on the shape and speech of a poem (1933, xiii).

The waterfall, the mist-bow and the cave in stanza three are all powerful spatial images conjuring up the impression of a haunted landscape, while in stanza four, 'The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily", suggesting that they are undisturbed by any ghostly flitting in their presence, but also that dawn is breaking and the world is emerging from sleep. Critical opinion has long been divided on the poem's simultaneous desire for return ("nay, bring me here again!") and its closing insistence on continuity ("I am just the same as when / Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers"). Is this just the desperate claim of a deluded speaker (prompting some readers to ask "how can he be 'just the same'"?), or is it an expression of achieved serenity of one who, as Peter Sacks claims, has emerged from the work of mourning and recovered a lost identity (1985, 254)? Between these divergent interpretations we might posit another reading based on the idea of the speaker's knowing and willed assertion of the need for reconciliation between past and present – an existentialist need for survival. The pivotal "when" in the

penultimate line is crucial: it insists on a meditative pause before we slip from the solitary "I" of the present to the unified "Our" of the past. The spatial poetics of "After a Journey" are so deft and subtle that "paths through flowers" both recalls the abundant happiness of youthful love and brings with it the unavoidable suggestion of the aftermath of death in flowers of mourning.

It would be unwise to propose a theory of spatial poetics in nineteenth-century elegy based on the scrutiny of a small number of poems by Tennyson, Rossetti and Hardy, but there are some worthwhile observations that emerge when we read these poems together, and we can at least work towards a tentative understanding of their shared landscapes of mourning. We can note with some degree of confidence, for instance, the growing tendency in post-Romantic English poetry to associate loss and grief with a particularized landscape – an unidealized, demythologized landscape – which contrasts strongly with some of the elaborate, stylized landscapes of earlier elegiac poetry. The tendency can be seen in the localized diction with which these new landscapes of mourning are described: in the "wold" and "furze" of Tennyson's *In Memoriam* lyric, in the "flat" of Rossetti's "Birchington Churchyard", and in the "coppice gate" of Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush". These are landscapes that, in every case, both invite and resist feelings of consolation. The "silvery gossamers", the "hill of hillocks, flowery and kept green", and the "tangled bine-stems" in these poems are at once intimately beautiful and strangely alien. In the end, however, what might prove to be most valuable is the realization that any persuasive account of spatial poetics in nineteenth-century elegy needs to take account not just of the figuration of space and time at the level of content, but of the dynamic interaction between the imagined landscape of mourning and the spatial design of the individual poem. As we have seen in each of the poems brought into discussion here, there is a compelling equivalence between the place associated with loss and the compositional space that

is the poem itself. A critical scrutiny of this kind seeks to show how landscapes in nineteenth-century poetry are imprinted with loss – how a word such as "lowly" has both topographical and experiential dimensions – but it also registers the achievement of the poem and the quality of its mourning through the intricate, corresponding wordscapes that are manifest at the level of diction, syntax, stanza, rhyme, and rhythm.

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